

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

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FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2220
INFO USLO RIYADH
AMCONSUL DHAHRAN

CONFIDENTIAL JIDDA 4053

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, SA
SUBJECT: POSSIBLE MINISTERIAL CHANGES

REF: RIYADH 408

1. USLO RIYADH HAS LEARNED FROM SOURCE WITH ACCESS TO MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND NATIONAL ECONOMY THAT MUHAMMAD ABU AL-KHAIL WILL BE REPLACED AS FINANCE MINISTER. ACCORDING TO SOURCE (WHO IS NOT ADMIRER OF MINISTER) ABU AL-AHAIL HAS WITHHELD MONEY FROM PROJECTS OF MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND MINERAL RESOURCES, HIS ACTION LED TO MINISTER AHMAD ZAKI YAMANI'S CONVINCING CROWN PRINCE FAHD THAT ABU AL-KHAIL IS NOT CAPABLE OF UNDERSTANDING ECONOMICS OF COMPLEX PROJECTS AND THAT HE SHOULD BE REPLACED.

2. SAME SOURCE REPORTED THAT MINISTERS OF LABOR AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS (IBRAHIM AL-ANQARI) AND HEALTH (HUSAIN ABD AL-RAZZAQ AL-JAZA'IRI) WILL ALSO BE REPLACED. NO REASON WAS GIVEN FOR THESE CHANGES.

3. COMMENT: RUMORS OF GOVERNMENT CHANGE ARE PERIODIC PHENOMENON IN SAUDI ARABIA. ONLY CONFIRMATION OF THIS
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ONE IS REPORT THAT ABU AL-KHAIL'S DEPUTY MANSUR AL-TURKI WILL BE INVOLUNTARILY LEAVING GOVERNMENT FOR PRIVATE BUSINESS. PREVIOUS RUMORS, INCLUDING FEBRUARY RUMOR OF ABU AL-KHAIL'S REPLACEMENT, HAVE NOT PROVED TO BE ACCURATE. ALTHOUGH ABU AL-KHAIL HAS BEEN CRITICIZED WITHIN MINISTRY FOR POOR ADMINISTRATION, SUCH CIRTICISM WOULD NOT LIKELY LEAD CROWN PRINCE TO DISMISS HIM. REPORTS MAY ORIGINATE

FROM STRAINS AND PRESSURES OF CURRENT BUDGET PREPARATION
WHEN ABU AL-DHAIL AND HIS MINISTRY ARE ONES TO REJECT
OR LIMIT OTHER MINISTRIES' PROJECTS.

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